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ABSTRACT

A statewide sample testing of writing skills in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades was conducted by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program in the fall of 1982. This report, which shares the writing assessment information (historical, descriptive, and interpretive) for educational decision-making, was prepared in the hope of increasing efforts of local educators to provide conprehensive writing curricula in their communities. It includes a brief history of the writing objectives and test development process, a description of the testing, an overview of findings, implications, and further plans. The test consists of two timed essay exercises to assess expressive and persuasive writing. The writing task, thetorical mode, objective, primary trait, and rationale of the primary trait are given for each test exercise. Scoring methods, developed from primary trait scoring, are described and test results presented. Less than 50 percent of the students tested reached the acceptable level of attainment on all aspects of the test and at each grade level. Lower than expected results indicate an urgent need to improve writing education in Michigan schools. Appendices contain a fact sheet, actual test items, additional tables, other MEAP Resources, a bibliography, and a report evaluation sheet. (BS)

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1982 - 83

WRITING EDUCATION

INTERPRETIVE REPORT

MICHIGAN
EDUCATIONAL
ASSESSMENT
PROGRAM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Writing Education Interpretive Report

A statewide sample testing of writing skills was conducted by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) during the fall of 1982. The major purpose of the Michigan Department of Education's writing assessment was to gather reliable and useful information about what students know and can do in the important communication skill area of writing. The major purpose of this report is to share the writing assessment information (historical, descriptive and interpretive) for educational decision-making with the state's educators, including classroom teachers, instructional specialists, education evaluators, curriculum developers and others.

Schools or individual classroom teachers who have used the MEAP writing tests will find this report helpful in interpreting their results. Educators who are planning to use the MEAP writing tests will find this report a useful orientation document. Improving instruction in Michigan schools is a priority goal of the State Board of Education. Hopefully this report will increase efforts of local educators to provide a comprehensive writing curriculum, adjusted to the specific needs of their community.

Organization of the Writing Education Interpretive Report

The Introduction of this report covers the purpose and organization. This section also contains an overview of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), a brief history of the writing objectives and test development process, a description of the 1982 writing sample testing, overview of findings, implications and future plans.

A description of the tests and scoring rationale are presented in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. Chapter 4 presents the results of the statewide sample testing.

The appendices contain a fact sheet, the actual test items, grade level tables showing the cross tabulation between the primary scores and the secondary scores, in percents and grade level scoring guide categories. A list of resources for local use of MEAP and a reference bibliography is provided. An evaluation sheet has also been included so that future interpretive reports can better meet your needs.

Overview of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is responsible for measuring the extent to which Michigan students have mastered specified basic skills. Since 1969, MEAP has provided information to the Governor, Legislature, State Board of Education, citizens, district personnel, teachers, parents, and students on the status and progress of Michigan basic skills education.

Basic to the development of the educational assessment program was the development of educational goals for Michigan schools by the State Board of Education and presented in the publication, Common Goals of Michigan Education.

The Michigan Department of Education staff, with the cooperation of educators and lay citizens, developed and published student performance objectives consistent with the Common Goals of Michigan Education in ten instructional areas for kindergarten through grade nine.

Each fall all fourth, seventh, and tenth graders are tested on selected minimal reading and mathematics skills. Although students are tested upon entering grade 4, 7, or 10, the skills tested should have been acquired in previous grades (K-3, 4-6, and 7-9, respectively).

In addition to measuring attainment of the minimal performance objectives in reading and mathematics, the Assessment Program also measures attainment of objectives in other essential skill areas. Each year a stratified, random sample of schools is drawn and one or two additional subject areas are assessed. Writing education was one of the areas measured in the fall of 1982.

Development of Performance Objectives

The philosophy upon which the writing objectives is based suggests that writing skills are best acquired through the writing act itself. People learn to write, this point of view maintains, by writing. For the most part, the writing objectives are the same at all three grade levels. Thus, students for example are asked to demonstrate their ability in writing to reveal personal feelings and ideas by the end of the third grade and are still doing this kind of thing by the end of the ninth grade. But though the objective remains the same, the content used to teach this objective and the procedures for teaching it become progressively more difficult.

1982 Writing Education Assessment

The sample testing for writing was conducted in the fall of the 1982-83 school year, in addition to the annual statewide testing of mathematics and reading. A total of 18 schools from 18 school districts were involved in the testing. These schools were randomly selected to represent different geographic areas and community types. Students from grades four, seven, and ten were tested. Six schools were selected for each grade level test. In all, about 240 fourth graders, 1,300 seventh graders, and 1,000 tenth graders were tested.

The writing assessment is comprised of two timed essay exercises designed to measure the ability of students in grades four, seven, and ten to write short essays for specific purposes. The two primary traits selected for testing were: (1) Expressive Writing and (2) Persuasive Writing. The test items used in the writing assessment were adapted from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Test which was administered to a national sample of students in 1980. A team of Michigan educators reviewed the NAEP items and identified the subset for inclusion in the Michigan testing.

A simplified scoring guide was also developed for the selected items using the Primary Trait scoring developed by NAEP. This method evaluates the student's capacity to write for precisely designed purposes. As such, this method emphasizes a closely defined task. In addition, other characteristics (secondary traits) can be scored. Language and mechanics was selected as the secondary trait to be scored in this assessment.

Training and scoring workshops were conducted to score the essays. A group of approximately 40 educators were specifically trained by MEAP staff and writing consultants on the primary and secondary trait scoring of the test items. The collected essays were scored using a seven-point scoring system. The initial scoring produced raw scores which were then converted into composite scores for purposes of analysis and reporting.

A conference of writing educators and specialists was convened to review the writing assessment test results, set criteria for attainment, identify areas of strength and weakness in student performance, and to identify the instructional and curricular implications of the data. The findings and implications from the review conference are included in this interpretive report, and represent the culmination of the 1982 Writing Education Assessment Project.

Overview of Findings

Summary

Expressive Writing

An acceptable score (5 or above) for the primary trait was attained by 8.6% of the fourth, 39.8% of the seventh, and 43.7% of the tenth grade students.

An acceptable score (5 or above) for the secondary trait was attained by 8.5% of the fourth, 34.8% of the seventh, and 40.7% of the tenth grade students.

Persuasive Writing

An acceptable score (5 or above) for the primary trait was attained by 23% of the fourth, 25.7% of the seventh and 24.2% of the tenth grade students.

An acceptable score (5 or above) for the secondary trait score was attained by 19.9% of the fourth, 31.2% of the seventh and 29.8% of the tenth grade students.

Analysis

On the 1982 Michigan Writing Assessment the acceptable level of attainment (5 or above) was reached by less than 50% of the students tested. This finding applies to all aspects of the test -- the primary and secondary traits, on both the expressive and persuasive exercises, at each grade level. The results are lower than expected and indicate an urgent need to improve

writing education in Michigan schools. Approximately one-third of the remaining students tested were near attainment with a primary and secondary trait score of 4. This finding was encouraging and indicates that attainment could be expected to rise significantly if writing instruction and the opportunity to practice writing were provided to the students.

On the expressive exercise, the same test item and a common scoring guide was used for all grade levels. This allowed the progression between grade levels to be determined. There was a reasonable and expected increase (31.2%) in attainment from fourth to seventh grade. However, from seventh to tenth grade there was strikingly small increase (4%). This finding suggests insufficient instruction is being provided in either mode at this level, or that students are not being given the opportunity to practice this form of writing. This finding is an excellent caution flag, sending a signal that a problem exists.

The persuasive exercise used a different test item at each grade level and the criteria for scoring was grade specific, based upon expected students' abilities. Approximately one-fourth of the tested students attained an acceptable score on this primary trait. The grade level results are not comparable, however they all indicate that most students have not mastered the skills necessary to write an acceptable narrative in the persuasive mode.

A common criteria was used to score the secondary trait (language and mechanics) for both exercises at each grade level. It was found that use of language and mechanics closely parallel the student's ability to express ideas, irrespective of mode.

Fourth Grade

More fourth grade students scored higher in the persuasive mode than in the expressive mode. There may be several reasons for this: (1) the topic for the persuasive mode -- the Puppy -- was probably a more engaging subject for fourth graders; (2) the expressive -- The Stork -- was scored according to common criteria established for all levels considering that fourth grade essays were judged using tenth grade criteria, the results are not particularly surprising; and (3) the persuasive mode is closer to what students do in real life situations.

Seventh Grade

Of the two modes tested, almost 40% of the students attained an acceptable score in the expressive mode, as compared to 25% in the persuasive mode.

In fact, a high percentage -- 7.9% -- of the students did not respond to the persuasive exercise. Fatigue may have been a factor, but disinterest in the topic -- The Principal Letter -- a more probable cause for the lower scores.

It may be noted that it is difficult to choose a topic that would be of interest to all students, especially as they become more diverse with age.

Tenth Grade

A most dramatic drop in scores took place between the two exercises. While 44% of the students attained an acceptable score in the expressive mode, only 24% achieved that score in the persuasive mode and 6.3% of the students did not respond. Again a fatigue factor, and disinterest in the topic might have been strong contributors.

Contributing Factors

The writing assessment results indicate that language skills achievement in Michigan is badly out of balance, and needs immediate attention from the total Michigan educational community. It is important for the educational leadership in our state at every level (state, higher education training institutions, local, school and classroom) to accept: (1) a portion of the responsibility for the results of this writing assessment and (2) the challenge to act upon the findings and implications. Parents and the community at large should also share the responsibility and should be encouraged to help meet the challenge.

The areas of strength and weakness in student performance have been identified on the 1983 Michigan Writing Assessment. Analyzing and reporting the results however, is only the beginning. The causes must be analyzed and the implications addressed if improvement of student writing performance is to be achieved.

Student's inability to write can be attributed to many factors: limitations of the test; interdependence of communication skills mastery (reading, writing, speaking and listening); inadequate teacher preparation for the teaching of writing; lack of emphasis placed on the importance of good writing skills; narrow confines of writing instruction, and the limited opportunities provided for students to write.

Test Limitations

The 1983 Michigan Writing Assessment does have limitations. The test is composed of two, timed, writing exercises on assigned topics. The collected essays were first-draft efforts, which did not allow for prewriting, writing, revising, and editing.

Excellent studies of the writing process have become available in recent years. Among the demonstrated results of this research are the following points: good writing does not necessarily result when arbitrary time limits are imposed; assigned writing cannot insure that the writer has something to say on the topic and a desire to say it; young writers do not concern themselves with mechanics and form when they are struggling to express an idea in an initial draft of a piece of writing. Testing situations which must fit time frames, ones that assign the same writing topic for all, cannot create appropriate conditions for eliciting the best writing students can produce.

At best, the results of the Michigan Writing Assessment or any tests of writing must be viewed by educators and the public as an indicator of writing performance. Although the Michigan Writing Assessment is not a perfect measure of writing performance, it is a realiable one and the best available, at this time. Hopefully, the statewide results and the writing assessment materials will be used and judged with these limitations in mind.

Communication Skills Interdependence

The interdependence of communication skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) cannot be overemphasized. All language abilities of students are interrelated. Students should be given direct instruction and provided the opportunity to experience and practice how to listen deeply and broadly, speak and write on a variety of topics and value reading. Without purposeful instruction, coordination of skill experiences and time-on-task, students will not be able to write well under any circumstance, let alone in a testing situation.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation for the instruction of writing appears to be inadequate. State teacher certification requirements in language are only in reading; in fact, recent additional required college credits in reading only exacerbate the narrowness of teacher preparation for language teaching. Most grants for research, for teacher inservice, for special programs authorized by the Michigan Department of Education over at least the last ten years have been for reading instruction and not for writing or listening or speaking.

Textbooks assigned for teachers to use stress grammar study, not writing. Class loads for teachers, who need to respond to the individual writing of students, are as high as those for teachers who lecture and give quickly scored tests. Writing instruction is expected of English teachers but not of teachers in other subject areas.

Emphasis and Commitment

The pursuit of academic competence has not emphasized writing in the recent past. However, improving instruction in Michigan schools is a priority goal of the State Board of Education. The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), since January, 1970, has provided information which contributes to the identifying of educational needs. The major emphasis has been placed on the basic skills of reading and mathematics because student success in these two areas is considered absolutely necessary for success in all other areas. However, the interest and commitment of the State Board of Education to broader areas of student achievement has been and continues to be demonstrated by the sample testing efforts in other essential skill areas, i.e., writing, listening, science, health, etc. The sample testing provides information on the status of essential skill areas in Michigan.

State Board of Education interest, commitment, and the reporting of results and implications is not sufficient. Local educators hold the key to achieving the goal of improving writing instruction. Local educators must work to make writing a high district priority and increase efforts to provide a well-rounded writing curriculum guided by statewide sample assessment, based upon local assessment, and adjusted to specific needs of their community.

Writing Instruction

It appears that writing instruction is being provided only in the narrow confines of elementary education and secondary English composition. All teachers should have responsibility to help students improve their writing skills. Worksheets, blank-filling exercises, multiple choice tests, and similar materials which teachers often use, avoid having students write. Proving opportunities for students to write may often be overlooked as viable unit or project objectives during program planning. If students are not being asked to write sentences and paragraphs about science, history, geography and the other school subjects, the school is not providing the guidance and practice students need to become better writers.

In homes and the greater community as well, emphasis has not been placed on writing as an important means of communication. Frequently, visual, oral, mechanical and technical skills are encouraged, and writing skills are neglected or overlooked. If a climate of words is not being built, if role models, experiences and opportunities are not being provided outside of the school environment, children are not being stimulated and encouraged to develop and use writing as an important tool of communication.

Conclusion

While the foregoing may explain why students are not doing well in the area of writing, it should not deter from the fact that competency in writing skill is an essential part of young people's education. As such, the Writing Assessment results clearly indicate the need for immediate attention to writing instruction in all grade levels of our public education.

General Implications

- State teacher certification requirements should be expanded to include writing instruction college credits, as well as reading.
- Teacher inservice research grants should be offered for communications skills as an integrated package rather than for each subject area in isolation.
- Higher education institutions which offer teacher training should offer courses on "How to Teach Integrated Communication Skills."
- Districts should adopt a writing philosophy and plan a K-12 writing program based upon the staff's philosophy of writing. Planning should include staff from all content areas. Learn about writing and the ways youngsters learn to write.
- If a district elects to assess its students in writing, the assessment should be based upon a writing sample with primary trait and perhaps secondary trait scoring. Test items are available through the Michigan Department of Education. If test items and scoring criteria from the Department are used, it is important for validity that the items are not altered in any way.

- Districts should provide teacher in-service opportunities on writing instruction and the integration of writing experiences into the total curriculum.

- Encourage publication of good student writing in school newspapers, literary journals, local newspapers and magazines.

- See that the high school's best writers are entered into the NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing Program or the Scholastic Writing Awards or other writing contests. Let everyone know that writing matters to you.

Instructional Implications

- Provide opportunities for students to write every day. Daily writing is the ideal; once a week is not often enough. All writing does not have to be graded or even read by the teacher. It may be read by other students, parents, or it may be a journal entry. But they should write each day beginning in first grade and continuing throughout all levels. Any kind of writing that has continuity--that links sentences together in some kind of cohesive statement--is useful for students at all levels. Any kind of isolated sentence response or workbook response contributes nothing to a student's ability to write and is essentially a waste of time, in terms of improving the skill of writing for a purpose.

- Have students write in a variety of forms (letters, essays, stories, etc.) for a variety of purposes (to inform, persuade, describe, etc.), and for a variety of audiences (other students, teacher, friends, strangers, relatives, business firms). Each form, purpose, and audience demands differences of style, tone, approach, and choice of words. A wide variety of writing experiences is critical to developing effective writing. Instruction in persuasive mode should take place at all levels. This is an important communication skill which emphasizes the use of logic, tact and supporting evidence. Persuasive writing should always include counter arguments, and should not rely on emotional appeals. It's important for students to know that the narrative has a beginning and middle and a conclusion.

- Provide many opportunities for impromptu writing. This affords students a chance to write their thoughts down on paper with some semblance of correctness.

- Instruction should follow that developmental process. Students move from personal, subjective, imaginative kinds of writing to objective, expository writing. The transition takes place in middle/junior high school.

- Writing instruction should take place within the framework of the writing process (pre-writing, writing, revising and editing) although writing does not depend upon sequential skills.

- Provide students with topics of interest to write about--preferably several topics they may choose from.

- Limit instruction in grammar and mechanics in isolation, because application is dependent upon the students' abilities to express themselves in an organized way. Some knowledge of grammar is useful, but too much time spent on study of grammar steals time from the study of writing. Time is much better spent in writing and conferring with the teacher or other students about each attempt to communicate in writing.

- Provide instruction and time on task opportunities for students to practice their writing skills in all disciplines (science, health, music, art, social studies, etc.). Do not limit writing to the English composition classes. See that teachers have plenty of writing supplies--writing paper, teaching materials, duplicating and copying machines, dictionaries, books about writing, and classroom libraries of good books.

- Provide well-planned integrated listening, speaking and writing activities.

- Be primarily interested in the content, not the mechanics of expression. It's easy to spot misspellings, faulty word usage, and shaky punctuation. Perfection in these escapes most adults, so don't demand it of children. Mark only a few mechanical errors when grading, leaving others for another time. What matters most in writing is words, sentences, and ideas. Perfection in mechanics develops slowly. Be patient.

- Be affirmative about the child's efforts in school writing. Recognize that for every error a child makes, he or she will do many things right. Applaud the good things you see. The willingness to write is fragile. Your optimistic attitude toward the child's efforts is vital to strengthening the writing habit.

- Check to see if there is continuing contact with the imaginative writing of skilled authors. While it's true we learn to write by writing, we also learn to write by reading. The works of talented authors should be studied not only for ideas but also for the writing skills involved. Good literature is an essential part of any effective writing program.

- Encourage the use of writing folders both at home and at shcool. Most writing should be kept, not thrown away. Folders are important means for helping both teachers and children see progress in writing skill.

Future Plans

This Interpretive Report provides information on the status of writing education and its implications in the State of Michigan. However, it is hoped that teachers and administrators will use it as a point of reference and a guide to assess the specific writing education needs of the students in their classrooms and schools.

The Minimal Performance Objectives for Communication Skills, Reading, Writing, Speaking/Listening, are available from Judy Hood, Writing Education Specialist, School Program Services, Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, Michigan, 48909. The Writing test items and scoring guides are available from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, Michigan, 48909. With these two sets of materials, teachers and administrators can use the test items to determine student needs in the identified areas.

DESCRIPTION OF TESTS

DESCRIPTION OF THE TESTS

The writing assessment is comprised of two timed essay exercises. It is designed to measure the ability of students in grades four, seven, and ten to write short essays for specific purposes. The two primary traits selected for testing were: (1) Expressive Writing, and (2) Persuasive Writing.

The first exercise (expressive) calls for the creation of a fictional narrative requiring students to look at a picture, "make up" and write a story. This exercise requires a maximum time of twenty-five (25) minutes.

The second exercise (persuasive) calls for persuasion through making of appropriate appeals--given a situation and a focus for appeal. The student is required to write a letter and convince the reader with appeals/reasons. This exercise requires a maximum time of fifteen (15) minutes.

This section provides a description for each test exercise. The description clarifies the writing task, rhetorical mode, objective, primary trait, and rationale of the primary trait.

DESCRIPTION OF TESTS

GRADES 4, 7, & 10

Writing Task: Exercise #1: Bird/Stork

Rhetorical Mode: Expressive

Objective: Demonstrates ability in writing to reveal personal feelings and ideas.

Primary Trait: Fiction to account for a situation.

Rationale of Primary Trait: The exercise calls for the creation of a fictional narrative--"make up a story." The subject, the stork, is given and the three possible first lines, two of which invite dialogue, provide suggestions for situations.

GRADE 4

Writing Task: Exercise #2: Puppy Letter

Rhetorical Mode: Persuasive - Social/Personal

Objective: Demonstrates ability to write in response to a wide range of societal demands and obligations. Ability is defined to include correctness in usage, punctuation, spelling, and form or convention as appropriate to particular writing tasks, e.g., manuscripts, letters.

Primary Trait: Situationally unique persuasion through making of appropriate appeals.

Rationale of Primary Trait: Essentially this is an exercise to determine how well a nine-year-old can cope with rhetorical appeals. The request for a letter to a landlord establishes a particular audience. The situation, keeping a pet in the face of opposition, focuses the writer's appeals. By directing the writer to try to convince the reader the exercise is persuasive, so a fully successful performance must contain appropriate appeals/reasons.

GRADE 7

Writing Task: Exercise #2: Letter to the Principal

Rhetorical Mode: Persuasive - Social/Organizational

Objective: Demonstrates ability to write in response to a wide range of societal demands and obligations. Ability is defined to include correctness in usage, punctuation, spelling, and form or convention as appropriate to particular writing tasks, e.g., manuscripts, letters.

Primary Trait: Persuasion through invention of issues, arguments, and evidence appropriate to the defense of a proposition.

Rationale of Primary Trait: The key terms in the directive are "one thing you think should be changed, how to bring about the change and how the school will be improved by it." Taken together, these terms indicate the persuasive orientation of the exercise and the method by which the persuasion is to be carried out. Respondents are being asked to use writing not as a way of simply expressing personal desire and dissatisfaction, but as a means of communicating public need and discovering ways of dealing systematically with public need.

GRADE 10

Writing Task: Exercise #2: Recreation Center

Rhetorical Mode: Persuasive - Social/Community

Objective: Demonstrates ability to write in response to a wide range of societal demands and obligations. Ability is defined to include correctness in usage, punctuation, spelling, and form or convention as appropriate to particular writing tasks, e.g., manuscripts, letters.

Primary Trait: Persuasion through invention and elaboration of arguments appropriate to sepcified issues and limited to an audience with a mixed bias.

Rationale of Primary Trait: This task represents controversial situations that prevail in any civilized society--situations which are resolved by a deliberative response. The directive to "be as convincing as possible" indicates the persuasive orientation of the task. It requires that respondents develop and support arguments appropriate to their position.

DESCRIPTION OF SCORING

DESCRIPTION OF SCORING

A simplified scoring guide was developed for the selected items using the Primary Trait scoring recommended by NAEP. This method evaluates the student's capacity to write for precisely designed purposes. As such, this method emphasizes a closely defined task, the primary trait. In addition, other characteristics (secondary traits) can be scored. Language and mechanics was selected as the secondary trait to be scored.

A group of approximately forty (40) educators were specifically trained by MEAP staff and writing consultants on the primary and secondary trait. The collected essays were scored using a seven-point scoring system.

The expressive trait exercise (Bird/Stork) was assigned a score by using the same criteria (See Appendix F) for each grade level, so that progress between grade levels could be determined. Criteria (see Appendix G-H) for scoring of persuasive trait exercises (Puppy Letter/Grade 4, Principal Letter/Grade 7 and Recreation Center/Grade 10) were specific for each unique exercise and took grade level into account. Criteria for scoring of the secondary trait (and Language Mechanics) were the same for all exercises at all grade levels.

The scoring guide categories for both traits on each exercise ranged from 0 to 4 and 7 to 9. A zero was assigned for no response. Most essays fell into the range of 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest).

The other categories were used to indicate unusual responses:

- Illegible or illiterate essays were scored (7);

- A score of (8) was assigned to essays that were written on another topic or where the task was misunderstood; and

- The score (9) was used to represent an "I don't know" response.

Each essay was read and scored independently by two trained people. Each person assigned two scores per essay (one score for the primary trait and one score for the secondary trait). If either of the two primary trait scores or the two secondary trait scores differed by two or more, a third person read and assigned primary and secondary trait scores to the essay.

The following scoring descriptions provide the general scoring rationale for each of the exercises included in the writing assessment. Specific scoring guide categories used to assign the scores can be found in Appendices F-J.

DESCRIPTION OF SCORING

General Scoring Rationale: Exercise 1 Grades 4, 7, 10	The techniques of fiction require control of a consistent point of view. Verbal cleverness would be desirable, but this is probably unrealistic for a 25-minute creation. Readers should look for narrative structures and amplifying detail which will entertain with a particular view of the world (expression) and which will account for a given situation (explanation). The reader's problem is to balance vividness, inventiveness, and aptness consistency provided by a sustained structure and point of view.
General Scoring Rationale: Exercise 2 Grade 4	Given the limits of time and the age of the children, it would be unreasonable to expect elaborately structured arguments. Even the better writers may produce appeals/ reasons in a relatively discrete manner--apparently thinking of one, writing it down, thinking of another, etc. Therefore, readers should concentrate attention on the writer's success at finding and formulating appeals appropriate to the audience and situation.
General Scoring Rationale: Exercise 2 Grade 7	Since the direcitons for this exercise seek to elicit reasoned and systematic methods of persuasion, responses to this exercise should be scored in terms of this criterion alone. Matters such as tone or letter form, for example, should not be weighed in scoring. Qualities that should be weighed as evidence of systematic persuasion are: (1) focus--evidenced by definition and concentration on a single change or problem and its solution; and (2) appropriateness of development--evidenced by consideration of issues, arguments, reasoning and by showing the change is practical and will bring about positive results.
General Scoring Rationale: Exercise 2 Grade 10	Support may consist of evidence and/or appeals to general truths, to experience, or to social and economic values. The support must be consistent with the position and should be of at least moderate length to demonstrate competence (scale point "3"). Excellence is achieved by demonstrating a capacity not only to invert and support arguments but also by addressing both sides of a controversial issue. Thus, the most successful respondents will be able to support their case on its own merits as well as answer or refute at moderate length the causes of the opposition.

Additional Trait: Language and Mechanics

Rational for Scoring this Additional Trait:

(Exercise 1 and 2 Grades 4, 7, 10)

These writing exercises require either expressive or persuasive writing. In each case, the language that the student shows, and the presence of absence of mechanical errors should not affect the primary trait scores. However, since these are considered important elements of writing by many people, all essays will also be scored for the extent of control of the language and accuracy of the mechanics. This will help to provide a more complete picture of the quality of student writing being judged.

Composite Scores

For the purposes of analysis and reporting the initial scores were converted into composite scores as follows:

Reader #1's raw primary trait score +
Reader #2's raw primary trait score = Composite Primary Trait Score

Reader #1's raw secondary trait score +
Reader #2's raw secondary trait score = Composite Secondary Trait Score

In cases where the two initial raw scores differed by two or more:

Reader #3's raw primary trait score was doubled to = Composite PTS
Reader #3's raw primary trait score was doubled to = Composite STS

NOTE: Only the composite scores were used in the review, interpretation and reporting of the writing assessment test results.

DESCRIPTION OF TEST RESULTS

DESCRIPTION OF TEST RESULTS

The individual composite scores were tabulated and aggregated at the state level only. Calculations and aggregations were not performed at the individual, school, or district levels. The review team was charged with the responsibility of setting the attainment criteria, identifying areas of strength and weakness in student performance, and identifying implications of the data.

After review and deliberation of the tests, the scoring criteria and the results, the decision was made to base the acceptable attainment criteria upon the scoring guide categories, independent of the assessment results. A composite score of five or higher was selected as the acceptable level of achievement for both the primary and secondary trait scores at each grade level (4, 7, and 10). This criteria level was an arbitrary decision.

The state level test results are reported on percentage summary tables. Figures 1-3 present grade level distribution of students by trait. Figure 1 shows the range of possible scores and lists separately the percent of students tested that attained each score on the primary trait and the secondary trait. Similar data are reported in Figure 2 for Grade 7 and Figure 3 for Grade 10.

Figures 4-7 present the percentage of students that attained the acceptable level (five or more) of achievement by grade and trait. Figure 4 shows for each grade level tested, the percentage of students that scored five or more on the expressive writing (Bird/Stork) primary trait exercise and the language and mechanics, secondary trait. Figure 5 shows the percentage of students that scored five or higher on both the primary and secondary trait for the expressive writing exercise. Similar data are reported for the persuasive writing exercise in Figure 6 for Grade 7 and Figure 7 for Grade 10.

The cross tabulation between the primary scores and the secondary scores in percents is presented in Appendix C. Similar data are reported in Appendix D for Grade 7 and Appendix E for Grade 10. For each table the column sum represents the percent distribution of the primary trait scores while the raw sums show the language/mechanics (secondary) trait scores for that exercise and grade level.

Areas of strength and weakness in student performance, as well as instructional and curricular implication of the data were addressed by the review team. The review conference findings and implications have been included in the Introduction section of the report.

Figure 1

Fourth Grade Distribution by Trait

Exercise 1: Bird/Stork N=233 students (1 student = .4%)

Expressive Writing (Primary Trait)		Language Mechanics (Secondary Trait)	
Score	% of Students	Score	% of Students
2	36.5%	2	36.9%
3	17.2%	3	18.9%
4	33.9%	4	32.2%
5	5.2%	5	6.4%
6	2.1%	6	1.7%
7	0.0%	7	0.0%
8	1.3%	8	0.4%
No Response	0.4%	No Response	1.7%
Other*	3.4%	Other*	1.7%

Exercise 2: Puppy Letter N=231 students (1 student = .4%)

Persuasive Writing (Primary Trait)		Language Mechanics (Secondary Trait)	
Score	% of Students	Score	% of Students
2	29.0%	2	22.1%
3	12.1%	3	7.8%
4	30.3%	4	46.3%
5	4.8%	5	8.7%
6	13.9%	6	10.8%
7	0.4%	7	0.4%
8	3.9%	8	0.0%
No Response	2.6%	No Response	3.0%
Other*	3.0%	Other*	0.9%

* "Other" includes writing samples which were illegibly written and those written on another topic.

Figure 2

Seventh Grade Distribution by Trait

Exercise 1: Bird/Stork N=1232 students (1 student = .1%)

Expressive Writing (Primary Trait)		Language Mechanics (Secondary Trait)	
Score	% of Students	Score	% of Students
2	9.3%	2	8.2%
3	9.0%	3	12.8%
4	38.1%	4	42.4%
5	17.1%	5	16.3%
6	16.1%	6	14.0%
7	4.7%	7	3.0%
8	1.9%	8	1.5%
No Response	1.5%	No Response	1.5%
Other*	2.1%	Other*	0.3%

Exercise 2: Letter to the Principal N=1274 Students (1 student = .1%)

Persuasive Writing (Primary Trait)		Language Mechanics (Secondary Trait)	
Score	% of Students	Score	% of Students
2	17.8%	2	11.5%
3	14.0%	3	11.9%
4	33.0%	4	37.2%
5	11.6%	5	14.3%
6	10.8%	6	13.7%
7	1.6%	7	2.1%
8	1.7%	8	1.1%
No Response	7.6%	No Response	7.8%
Other*	1.9%	Other*	1.0%

* "Other" includes writing samples which were illegibly written and those written on another topic.

Figure 3

Tenth Grade Distribution by Trait

Exercise 1: Bird/Stork N=966 Students (1 student = .1%)

Expressive Writing (Primary Trait)		Language Mechanics (Secondary Trait)	
Score	% of Students	Score	% of Students
2	8.9%	2	9.0%
3	8.5%	3	9.2%
4	36.1%	4	39.3%
5	16.9%	5	16.5%
6	19.0%	6	18.8%
7	4.2%	7	3.4%
8	3.6%	8	2.0%
No Response	0.6%	No Response	0.6%
Other*	2.1%	Other*	1.1%

Exercise 2: Recreation Center N=960 Students (1 student = 1.%)

Persuasive Writing (Primary Trait)		Language Mechanics (Secondary Trait)	
Score	% of Students	Score	% of Students
2	17.7%	2	12.6%
3	18.0%	3	13.6%
4	31.3%	4	36.6%
5	12.7%	5	14.8%
6	9.0%	6	12.7%
7	2.0%	7	2.0%
8	0.5%	8	0.3%
No Response	6.3%	No Response	6.4%
Other*	2.6%	Other*	1.0%

* "Other" includes writing samples which were illegibly written and those written on another topic.

Figure 4

Percentage of Students Attaining Acceptable Level (Score of 5 or Higher)

	Expressive Writing (Primary Trait)	Language/Mechanics (Secondary Trait)
Grade 4	8.6%	8.5%
Grade 7	39.8%	34.8%
Grade 10	43.7%	40.7%

Figure 5

Percentage of Students Attaining Acceptable Level on BOTH Primary Trait AND Secondary Trait (Scores of 5 or Higher on Both Traits)

Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
3.9%	25.3%	28.5%

Figure 6

Percentage of Students Attaining Acceptable Level (Score of 5 or More)

	Persuasive Writing (Primary Trait)	Language/Mechanics (Secondary Trait)
Grade 4	23.0%	19.9%
Grade 7	25.7%	31.2%
Grade 10	24.2%	29.8%

Figure 7

Percentage of Students Attaining Acceptable Level on BOTH Primary Trait AND Secondary Trait

Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
10.4%	16.8%	17.8%

APPENDIX

1982-83 Writing Education Assessment
Fact Sheet

1. What is the Writing Assessment?

The 1982-83 Writing Assessment was the second statewide testing of writing skills conducted by the Michigan Department of Education. The first statewide testing was done in 1978 through the sample testing of 24 schools in the state.

2. What is the Purpose of the Writing Assessment Project?

The major purpose of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is to provide information useful for educational decision-making to the state's educators, including classroom teachers, instructional specialists, and others.

Specifically, the purpose of this assessment is to provide teachers, education evaluators, and curriculum developers with reliable and useful information about what students know and can do in the important communication skill area of writing.

3. What Kind of Tests Were Used?

The writing assessment is comprised of two timed essay exercises. It is designed to measure the ability of students in grades four, seven, and ten to write short essays for specific purposes. The two primary traits selected for testing were: (1) Expressive Writing, and (2) Persuasive Writing. The first exercise (expressive) calls for the creation of a fictional narrative requiring students to look at a picture, "make up" and write a story. This exercise requires a maximum time of twenty-five (25) minutes. The second exercise (persuasive) calls for persuasion through making of appropriate appeals--given a situation and a focus for appeal. The student is required to write a letter and convince the reader with appeals/reasons. This exercise requires a maximum time of fifteen (15) minutes.

4. Who Developed the Tests?

The test items used in the writing assessment were adapted from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Test which was administered to a national sample of students in 1980.

Four members of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE) reviewed the NAEP items and identified a subset for inclusion in Michigan testing.

5. Who was Tested?

A total of 18 schools from 18 school districts were involved in the testing. These schools were randomly selected to represent different geographic areas and community types. Students from grades four, seven, and ten were tested. Six schools were selected for each grade level test. In all, about 240 fourth graders, 1,300 seventh graders, and 1,000 tenth graders were tested.

6. When Were the Students Tested?

The sample testing for writing was conducted in the fall of the 1982-83 school year, in addition to the annual statewide testing of mathematics and reading.

7. How Were the Tests Scored?

A simplified scoring guide was developed for the selected items using the Primary Trait scoring recommended by NAEP. This method evaluates the student's capacity to write for precisely designed purposes. As such, this method emphasizes a closely defined task, the primary trait. In addition, other characteristics (secondary traits) can be scored. Language and mechanics was selected as the secondary trait to be scored.

8. Who Scored the Tests?

A group of approximately 40 teachers and other educators were specifically trained by MEAP staff and other writing consultants on the primary traits and mechanics scoring of the test items. These educators then scored all the collected essays using a seven-point scoring system. Each essay was scored by two independent trained readers, and a third reader was used to reconcile any differences in scores.

9. How Did the Students Perform?

On the 1982 Michigan Writing Assessment the acceptable level of attainment (5 or above) was reached by less than 50% of the students tested. This finding applies to all aspects of the test -- the primary and secondary traits, on both the expressive and persuasive exercises, at each grade level. The results are lower than expected and indicate an urgent need to improve writing education in Michigan schools. Approximately one-third of the remaining students tested were near attainment with a primary and secondary trait score of 4. This finding was encouraging and indicates that attainment could be expected to rise significantly if writing instruction and the opportunity to practice writing were provided to the students.

10. What Factors Contribute to Inability to Write?

Writing inability can be attributed to many factors: limitations of the test; student's interest, fatigue, and/or disinterest; scoring criteria; choice of topic; interdependence of communication skill mastery; lack of emphasis placed on the importance of writing, inadequate teacher preparation for the teaching of writing; narrowness of scope in which writing skills are taught; and limited time-on-task opportunities for students.

11. What Can be Done to Improve Students' Writing Ability?

Students' writing abilities can be improved by providing writing instruction and time-on-task opportunities for students to practice their writing skills in all disciplines. Improving and updating teacher preparation in writing instruction is also a major factor in upgrading writing proficiency.

12. How to Get More Information

Questions regarding the writing test and the writing assessment can be directed to:

Michigan Department of Education
Michigan Educational Assessment Program
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

Ph#. (517) 373-8393

Test Items

EXERCISE 1

MEAP 1982
Grade 4, 7, & 10

LOOK AT THE PICTURE PRINTED ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE FOR A WHILE AND THEN MAKE UP A STORY ABOUT IT. WHEN YOU ARE READY, WRITE YOUR STORY. IT MAY BE HELPFUL FOR YOU TO START WITH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LINES, BUT YOU MAY BEGIN IN ANY WAY YOU WISH.

Possible First Lines

"I'm telling you, Henry, if you don't get rid of that thing, it's going to eat up the cat!"

"But, Mother, I am telling the truth! It laid an egg in the Chevy."

"Last night a very odd-looking bird appeared in the neighborhood."

MEAP 82 - GRADE 4

EXERCISE 2

PRETEND THAT YOUR FAMILY IS MOVING TO A NEW APARTMENT. THE LANDLORD HAS REFUSED TO LET YOUR PUPPY LIVE THERE. WRITE THE LANDLORD A LETTER, TRYING TO CONVINCE HIM TO LET YOU KEEP YOUR PUPPY IN THE NEW APARTMENT.

SPACE IS PROVIDED BELOW AND ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES. SIGN YOUR LETTER "CHRIS SMITH".

240 West Street
Bigtown, Pennsylvania

January 4, 1979

Dear Mr. James:

MEAP 82 - GRADE 7

EXERCISE 2

IMAGINE THAT YOUR PRINCIPAL ASKED FOR SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THINGS BETTER IN YOUR SCHOOL. WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR PRINCIPAL TELLING JUST ONE THING YOU THINK SHOULD BE CHANGED, HOW TO BRING ABOUT THE CHANGE, AND HOW THE SCHOOL WILL BE IMPROVED BY IT. SPACE IS PROVIDED BELOW AND ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES. SIGN YOUR LETTER "CHRIS JOHNSON".

333 West Street
Flint, Michigan 48888
September 5, 1982

Mary Hopkins, Principal
Steven Middle School
Flint, Michigan 48888

MEAP 82 - GRADE 10

EXERCISE 2

SOME HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE PROPOSED CONVERTING AN OLD HOUSE INTO A RECREATION CENTER WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE MIGHT DROP IN EVENINGS FOR TALK AND RELAXATION. SOME LOCAL RESIDENTS OPPOSE THE PLAN ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE CENTER WOULD DEPRESS PROPERTY VALUES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND ATTRACT UNDESIRABLE TYPES. A PUBLIC HEARING HAS BEEN CALLED.

WRITE A BRIEF PAPER TO TURN IN AT THE PUBLIC HEARING SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING THE PLAN. REMEMBER TO TAKE ONLY ONE POINT OF VIEW. ORGANIZE YOUR ARGUMENTS CAREFULLY AND BE AS CONVINCING AS POSSIBLE. SPACE IS PROVIDED BELOW AND ON THE NEXT THREE PAGES.

Figure 8

Fourth Grade Two-Way Distribution by Trait

Exercise 1: Bird/Stork N=233 students (1 student = .4%)
Primary Trait - Expressive

Mechanics	Percent of Students 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mechanics %'s
2	20.6%	4.7%	10.7%	0.9%	0	0	0	36.9%
3	8.6%	4.3%	4.3%	0.9%	0	0	0.4%	18.5%
4	7.3%	7.7%	14.6%	2.6%	0	0	0	32.2%
5	0	0.4%	3.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0	0.4%	6.4%
6	0	0	0.4%	0	1.3%	0	0	1.7%
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.4%	0.4%
Primary Trait %'s	36.5%	17.2%	33.9%	5.2%	2.1%	0.0%	1.3%	96.2%*

* The remaining 3.8% of the students either did not respond to this item, wrote illegibly, or wrote about another topic.

Exercise 2: Puppy Story N=231 students (1 student = .4%)
Primary Trait - Persuasive

Mechanics	Percent of Students 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mechanics %'s
2	11.3%	3.0%	3.9%	0	0	0	2.6%	20.8%
3	3.0%	0.4%	3.9%	0	0	0	0	7.3%
4	13.0%	6.9%	16.0%	3.9%	5.6%	0.4%	0	45.8%
5	1.3%	1.3%	4.3%	0	1.7%	0	0	8.6%
6	0	0.4%	2.2%	0.9%	6.1%	0	1.3%	10.9%
7	0	0	0	0	0.4%	0	0	0.4%
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Primary Trait %'s	29.0%	12.1%	30.3%	4.8%	13.9%	0.4%	3.9%	93.8%*

* The remaining 6.2% of the students either did not respond to this item, wrote illegibly, or wrote about another topic.

Figure 9

Seventh Grade Two-Way Distribution by Trait

Exercise 1: Bird/Stork N=1232 students (1 student = .1%)
Primary Trait - Expressive

Mechanics	Percent of Students 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mechanics %'s
2	3.5%	1.7%	2.6%	0.2%	0.1%	0	0	8.1%
3	1.7%	2.9%	6.3%	0.9%	0.5%	0.2%	0	12.5%
4	3.2%	3.6%	23.1%	7.0%	4.1%	0.5%	0.2%	41.7%
5	0.6%	0.7%	3.7%	6.3%	3.5%	1.0%	0.2%	16.0%
6	0.2%	0.1%	2.4%	2.4%	6.0%	1.7%	0.9%	13.7%
7	0	0	0.2%	0.3%	1.1%	1.1%	0.3%	3.0%
8	0	0	0	0.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	1.4%
Primary Trait %'s	9.3%	9.0%	38.1%	17.1%	16.1%	4.7%	1.9%	96.4%*

* The remaining 3.6% of the students either did not respond to the item, wrote illegibly, or wrote about another topic.

Exercise 2: Letter to the Principal N=1274 students (1 student = .1%)
Primary Trait - Persuasive

Mechanics	Percent of Students 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mechanics %'s
2	6.6%	2.2%	1.6%	0.2%	0	0	0	10.6%
3	3.7%	2.9%	4.6%	0.5%	0.1%	0	0	11.8%
4	5.3%	6.4%	17.3%	4.6%	3.2%	0.3%	0	37.1%
5	0.9%	1.4%	5.7%	3.1%	3.1%	0	0	14.2%
6	1.1%	0.9%	3.3%	3.2%	3.8%	0.9%	0.5%	13.7%
7	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0	0.6%	0.2%	0.5%	2.1%
8	0	0	0.1%	0	0.1%	0.2%	0.6%	1.1%
Primary Trait %'s	17.8%	14.0%	33.0%	11.6%	10.8%	1.6%	1.7%	90.6%*

* The remaining 9.4% of the students either did not respond to this item, wrote illegibly, or wrote about another topic.

Tenth Grade Two-Way Distribution by Trait

Exercise 1: Bird/Stork N=966 students (1 student = .1%)
Primary Trait - Expressive

Mechanics	Percent of Students 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mechanics %'s
2	2.9%	1.6%	3.8%	0.2%	0.1%	0	0	8.6%
3	1.9%	2.1%	3.6%	0.9%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	9.2%
4	3.3%	4.2%	18.3%	6.7%	5.4%	0.4%	0.2%	38.5%
5	0.1%	0.3%	7.0%	4.6%	3.7%	0.5%	0.1%	16.4%
6	0.3%	0.3%	2.9%	4.1%	7.8%	2.1%	0.8%	18.3%
7	0	0	0.2%	0.3%	1.3%	0.7%	0.8%	3.3%
8	0	0	0.1%	0	0.3%	0.3%	1.1%	1.9%
Primary Trait %'s	8.9%	8.5%	36.1%	16.9%	19.0%	4.2%	3.6%	96.2% *

* The remaining 3.8% of the students either did not respond to the item, wrote illegibly, or wrote about another topic.

Exercise 2: Recreation Center N=960 students (1 student = .1%)
Primary Trait - Persuasive

Mechanics	Percent of Students 2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mechanics %'s
2	8.3%	1.5%	1.9%	0.1%	0	0	0.1%	11.9%
3	4.2%	5.3%	3.4%	0.2%	0	0	0	13.1%
4	4.6%	9.1%	16.6%	4.6%	1.3%	0	0	36.2%
5	0.1%	1.8%	5.9%	4.1%	2.4%	0	0.1%	14.4%
6	0	0.4%	3.1%	3.4%	4.7%	0.8%	0.1%	12.5%
7	0	0	0	0.3%	0.6%	0.8%	0.2%	1.9%
8	0	0	0	0	0	0.3%	0	0.3%
Primary Trait %'s	17.7%	18.0%	31.3%	12.7%	9.0%	2.0%	0.5%	90.3%*

* The remaining 9.7% of the students either did not respond to the item, wrote illegibly, or wrote about another topic.

GRADES 4, 7, and 10

Scoring Guide Categories:

0 = No response.

1 = No evidence of storytelling. These responses do not show evidence of storytelling. Thus, they either accumulate details without a situation to anchor and unite them, or they add just a few descriptive details to one of the situations provided in the stem.

2 = Some evidence of storytelling. These responses attempt the basic task of storytelling. They invent a situation to account for the bird, but the fictional demands are fundamentally unfulfilled for one of several reasons: 1) the response may give the bare outline of a plot, with a beginning, middle and end, but little or no elaboration of detail; 2) the response may have no sense of a plot, but may simply ramble on from the initial situation with many details, but with no process or purpose to give it point or structure; 3) the response may begin telling a story, but never gets further than the beginning; 4) the response may relate several separate stories without evident connection between them.

3 = Clear evidence of storytelling. These responses clearly show evidence of the storyteller's obligation to structure a plot and elaborate it with appropriate details. Thus they show a markedly greater sense of coherence with amplitude than "2" responses. But they are usually somewhat flawed in one of the following ways: 1) one or another part of the basic plot may be thinly or inconsistently detailed; 2) the situation may be established, the plot developed, but the piece may come to an end without a clear or appropriate closure; 3) the plot may be completely elaborated, but it contains technical inconsistencies in point of view, handling of dialogue or management of narration.

4 = Structure and complete storytelling. These responses tell a complete story, amply as well as appropriately detailed at all points, and fully as well as consistently resolved. They exhibit tight control in the management of a whole fiction to provide context for the status of the bird.

7 = Illegible, illiterate.

8 = Misunderstands the task, writes on another topic.

9 = I don't know.

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GRADE 4

Scoring Guide Categories:

0 = No response.

1 = Letters lacking appeals/reasons. These letters either contain no appeals or only name inappropriate or vague reasons. They tend to 1) be confusing in that it is difficult to understand what the situation really is or what the letter is supposed to accomplish, 2) be comprised mainly of threats of violence or retribution, or 3) request to keep the puppy but offer no appeals or only offer a request with one general statement which is not sufficiently specific or relevant to be considered an appeal.

2 = Letters with limited appeals/reasons. Letters in this category cover a broad range, but all are in some sense underdeveloped. Some letters request to keep the puppy and offer one or two practical or sympathetic appeals. Others offer several (2 or more) appropriate appeals or general statements, but only infer that the purpose of the letter is a request to keep the puppy. If a response includes a request and several appeals one of which is inappropriate, the persuasive qualities will be less effective and the letter will probably remain in the "2" category.

3 = Letters substantiated with appropriate appeals/reasons. Generally these letters include a request substantiated with approximately three concrete appeals. However, some "3" letters cite numerous (4 or more) reasons but they are presented as a list rather than a unified request. Unusually effective presentations of pathetic appeals or rational negotiations may also be classified in the "3" category.

4 = Letters developed and substantiated with appropriate appeals/reasons. These letters are organized such that they operate as a unified piece of persuasion. They tend to have openings, closings or both and contain numerous (4 or more) appeals. Not all of the separate appeals need to be developed, but usually one is, and all the appeals are appropriate.

7 = Illegible, illiterate.

8 = Misunderstands the task, writes on another topic.

9 = I don't know.

NOTE: Some examples of appeals are listed on the following page.

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Types of Appropriate Appeals/ Reasons:

1) Practical/Specific: "He's house trained." "He doesn't shed." "I'll take him for walks." "He doesn't bark." "I'll give him baths." "Doesn't chew on furniture." "He's quiet." "He's a small breed." "I will pay more rent." "I won't let him outside, except to take him for walks."

2) Sympathetic/Pathetic: dog birthday present, pleading (I will cry, please, please), had dog since was baby, the dog will die, dog legacy of dead grandmother, dog only friend, etc.

3) Other: Suggesting a tryout period, nice introductions (allow me to introduce myself), observing that you understand why the landlord doesn't allow pets, etc.

Types of Inappropriate Appeals/ Reasons:

1) Mildly Inappropriate: Offer to give dog to landlord, will move if can't keep dog, the dog will never go outside.

2) Totally Inappropriate: violent threats, giant bribes, childish ranting--"I will hate you."

3) Contradictory: good watch dogs that don't bark or bite.

Types of Vague Appeals/Reasons and General Statements:

"I'll feed my dog." "He won't wreck the apartment." "I'll take care of my dog." "He's a black and white dog." "He's small." "He'll be no trouble." "I love my dog." "He's cute." "I want to keep my dog." "My dog is harmless."

GRADE 7

Scoring Guide Categories:

0 = No response.

1 = Do not define and defend a change. Some "1" papers do not propose a change or identify a problem, they are simply statements of attitude, judgment, desire or dissatisfaction. Other "1" papers do identify a problem or recommend a change, but do not explain how to implement the change or solve the problem. They do not tell how the school will be benefitted.

NOTE: An elaborately detailed description of a problem should not be scored higher than "1" if no solution is identified or defended. Lists of problems or changes should also be scored "1".

2 = Define a change and offer minimal defense. Respondents state a change they want made in their school or a problem that needs solving. In addition, they must tell: 1)how to bring about the change or solve the problem; or 2)some way the school will be improved by the proposed change or solution.

Some "2" papers do present all three elements, but the reasoning is not developed. Some are in a sketchy, skeletal, rudimentary form that is basically a bare outline. Others are disjointed or the ideas aren't related (solution doesn't solve problem, benefit isn't related to change, etc.).

3 = Define and defend a change. Papers state a change or identify a problem, explain how to bring about the change or solve the problem and tell how the change will benefit the school. Reasoning is used to expand or explain at least one of the elements. For example, there might be a detailed plan for an elaborate explanation of the problem. Usually, one element is well developed while the others are only asserted or barely mentioned resulting in an unevenly developed paper. (Occasionally a "3" paper will contain an elaboration of a severe problem (drugs, race riots, etc.) that implies the benefits without stating them.)

4 = Systematically define and defend a change. These papers have all the elements of "3" papers. In addition, they cast the material in a systematic structure which reflects the logical steps in the process of bringing about the change. At least two, and possibly all, of the elements are expanded so that the various issues are related to each other and to the proposition being defended.

7 = Illegible, illiterate.

8 = Misunderstands the task, writes on another topic.

9 = I don't know.

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GRADE 10

Scoring Guide Categories:

0 = No response.

1 = Do not define and defend a point of view. Some of these papers have not explicitly or implicitly taken a position. Others may contain a thesis statement or clearly imply a position but do not give several supporting reasons to develop their arguments. Some typical score point "1" papers present:

a) Attitudes and opinions about related social issues without a clear statement of position--these include free-floating, uncontrolled statements of opinion showing no concern for taking a stand & supporting it.

b) Position statements but no related support--often these papers merely reiterate their stand in various forms.

c) Position statements preceded or followed by over-elaborate introductions.

d) Position statements followed by arguments and appeals not connected to the crucial issues.

2 = Define a point of view and offer minimal defense. These papers explicitly state or strongly imply a position and give one or more clusters of arguments or appeals. (A cluster is a reason asserted with no more than one or two bits of evidence or related appeal.) Score point "2" papers usually consist of a chain of briefly developed appeals in support of a position or answering the opposition. They do not develop a line of argument or link the clusters to each other. (The underlying assumption is that the lines of arguments, reasons or appeals are appropriate to the issue.)

3 = Define and defend a point of view. These papers clearly state or imply a position and present at least one substantially developed line of argument or two moderately developed lines of argument relevant to the issues at hand. More evidence to support the position is presented than in "2" papers.

4 = Systematically define and defend a point of view. These papers present at least two moderately developed lines of argument, one which supports the position and one which answers the possible arguments raised by the opposition. The lines of argument usually will be linked as well as carefully organized. Other "4" papers may contain a moderate statement of support with a brief address answering each of the major opposition positions.

7 = Illegible, illiterate.

8 = Misunderstands the task, writes on another topic.

9 = I don't know.

Language and Mechanics Scoring Guide Categories

Scoring Guide Categories:

0 = No Response

1 = Minimal Amount of Control. These responses evidence very little or no control of the mechanics, spelling, punctuation or grammar and the language used in the sentences in the writings is inconsistent or inappropriate. Responses will also be uneven--one part may be okay, but most is not clear or accurate.

2 = Some Control. These responses generally show some control of the mechanics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Language used shows some logical consistency. However, there are serious errors and these affect the readability of the responses

3 = General Control, With A Few Lapses. These responses are generally well written and demonstrates language control. Almost all spelling, grammar, punctuation and other mechanics are correctly used. The meaning of the language used throughout the essay is clear. However, there can be a few lapses, such as misspellings, inappropriate phrasing, a run-on sentence, and so forth.

4 = Very Good Control. These responses could be characterized as "very well written," showing consistently good control of language. The transition between sentences and paragraphs flows smoothly, the meaning of the language used is clear, and there are none or almost no errors of a mechanical nature. Nothing detracts from the reader's getting meaning from what the writer wrote.

7 = Illegible, illiterate.

9 = I don't know.

Resources for Local Use of the MEAP Writing Test

I. Testing Materials*

A. Assessment-Administration Manual, Grades 4, 7 and 10

B. Student Assessment Booklet, Grade 4

C. Student Assessment Booklet, Grade 7

D. Student Assessment Booklet, Grade 10

II. Scoring Materials

A. Primary Trait Guide: Puppy Letter (Grade 4)

B. Primary Trait Guide: Principal Letter (Grade 7)

C. Primary Trait Guide: Recreation Center (Grade 10)

D. Primary Trait Guide: Bird/Stork (Grades 4, 7 and 10)

E. Language and Mechanics Trait Scoring Guide (Grades 4, 7 and 10)

F. Directions to Scoring Team Leaders and Assistants

III. Background Information

A. Mullis, Ina V. S., "Using the Primary Trait System for Evaluating Writing," National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1980. (40 pages)

B. Klaus, Carl H., Composing Childhood Experience: An Approach to Writing and Learning in the Elementary Grades, CEMREL, St. Louis, Mo., 1982.**

C. Klaus, Carl H., Composing Adolescent Experience: An Approach to Writing and Learning in the Junior High School Grades, CEMREL, St. Louis, Mo., 1982.**

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*One sample set of each type of material is available; additional copies can be made locally.

**Not available from MEAP.

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Moffett, J., Teaching the Universe of Discourse, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Murray, D., A Writer Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Murray, D.M., A Writer Teaches Writing, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.
(This is undoubtedly the best around for a teacher wishing to begin teaching writing through workshops and conferences.)

Petrosky, A.R., & Brozick, J., A Model for Teaching Writing Based Upon Current Knowledge of the Composing Process, English Journal, 1979, 68, 96-101.

Walshe, R.D., What's Basic to Teaching Writing, English Journal, 1979, 68, 51-56.

WRITING INTERPRETIVE REPORT EVALUATION SHEET

Please answer the following questions so that future interpretive reports can better meet your needs.

Position Title: _____

Grade Level(s) Served: _____

1. Which section of this Report did you find most useful?

   _____

2. Was there information not included that would have been useful?

   _____Yes _____No

   If yes, please describe: _____

   _____

3. Has this Report stimulated your interest in Writing Education?

   _____Yes _____No

   If no, why not? _____

   _____

4. Do you intend to request the additional Writing Education information or materials described in this Report?

   _____Yes _____No

5. What use have you made of the information provided in this Report (i.e., curriculum analysis, instructional modifications, student needs identification, etc.). Please describe: _____

   _____

   _____

6. Would you like someone to contact you about how to use this information in your school or district?

   _____Yes _____No

   If yes, please give your name and phone number: _____

   _____

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